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A Reaction to the Report of the Worth Commission on Educational Planning

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A Reaction to the Report of the Worth Commission on Educational Planning

Prepared by

The Board of Trustees
of the
Calgary R.C. Separate School District #1

The Board of Trustees of the Calgary Roman Catholic School District #1, wishes to bring to the attention of the Cabinet Committee on Education initial reactions to the ten priority recommendations of the Report of the Commission on Educational Planning and to six additional matters discussed in the Report.

The Board intends to continue its study and interpretation of The Report and in light of this and of interpretations of The Report that may develop as The Report is discussed generally it reserves the right not to be firmly bound by these initial reactions.

The Commission proposes for Albertans an approach to patterns of education based on the pervading theme of humanism. The support for the person-centered society appears to have been developed to a large extent on the basis of a man-centered view of reality. Whilst acknowledging that our humanity is a major and essential entity in all considerations of the educational process it does not contain the prime cause nor constitute the basic reality of our existence. We hold that man has a dependent relationship to his Maker or Creator and this pertinent dimension, which exists, must not be overlooked, ignored or denied if consideration of education is to be fully adequate. This latter dimension can and does provide an even stronger base for the advocacy of a person-centered society which we would support.

For the achievement of a number of its proposals the Commission appears to advocate some rather strong traces of centralization. This appears with respect to such things as the Alberta Academy, the Integrated Provincial Development Plan, Provincial Learning Resource Centre, Alberta Learners' Mart, ACCESS, and proposals for reorganization of the Departments of Education. Undoubtedly a certain amount of centralization is needed but we would support the notion that whatever moves towards decentralization and local autonomy are possible will enhance the person-centered society and would urge the government carefully and continuously to con-

sider whether centralization may offset the initial benefits intended or obtained.

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The Board of Trustees believes that in addition to producing growth in knowledge and skills some basic objectives of education are to ripen the capacity for right judgement, to provide an introduction into the cultural heritage of past generations, to promote a sense of values, to prepare the student for his livelihood as an adult, to foster willingness to understand others and, finally and pervading all else, to aid him towards his fulfillment as a human being as understood in the Christian concept.

The Board of Trustees accepts with some qualification the four basic ideals proposed by the Commission as a means of achieving a person-centered society which it also would find acceptable.

1. a futures-perspective that embodies the belief that we must alter the time-bias in education toward the future;

2. life-long learning, a commitment to extend education on a continuing, though intermittent, basis throughout the lifetime of each citizen, according to individual needs and desires;

3. faith in participatory planning to harness the resources and will of Albertans so that the difficulties inherent in this educational transition may be surmounted;

4. development of socially sensitive, autonomous individuals and unequivocal support for their right to exist in an environment that will encourage personal growth to the fullest extent of their capabilities.

The futures-perspective ideal, while acceptable, requires the obvious caution that agreement on what future we want or will have will not be an easy matter since we cannot always agree on what the present is or even on what the past has been or meant.

Our understanding of the term "autonomous individuals" in the fourth ideal is conditioned by the belief that created man, while he can be and is to be autonomous amongst his peers before God, can never be considered as independent from God upon whom he relies for creation and continuation as a being.

The Board of Trustees agrees that the guiding principles as proposed by the Commission are sound. As stated by the Commission these principles must be compatible with our ideals and our goals. Consequently any distinctions we have with respect to these latter affect our interpretation of the principles.

1. Adaptability - The educational system should be able to respond easily and quickly to new circumstances.

2. Context - Educational experiences should be seen to be relevant to both current realities and future probabilities.

3. Coordination - Various aspects of the educational enterprise should function in harmony with each other and with other sectors or activities of society.

4. Diversity - Variation in educational experiences and organization should be encouraged.

5. Efficiency - The educational system should achieve maximum effect with minimum effort and expense.

6. Equity - Education should be available on a just and fair basis with equality of output or similarity in achievement and effect.

7. Participation - All those affected should share in the determination of policy for education.

8. Personalization - Activities in education should be related to the needs, aspirations and rights of the individual.

9. Quality - The educational system should strive for excellence in everything that is undertaken.

10. Unity - Education should develop those behaviors that facilitate human communication and social integration necessary for collective action to sustain personal growth.

With regard to Context we have previously suggested that equivocal definition of or agreement on "current realities and future probabilities" will affect the implementation of this principle.

With regard to Diversity we trust that the Separate Schools of the province are seen to be a worthy manifestation of this principle.

With regard to Personalization we would make the added observation that the perception of individual rights is colored by one's concept of the nature of man and also has a relationship to the rights of society.

With regard to Unity when the term "social integration" is employed we would not wish it to be interpreted in any way that overlooked the point of view that society exists to serve the individual and not vice-versa.

The Board directs its attention first to the priority proposals of the Commission and then to six additional items. Further comment and reaction either by way of elaboration or with respect to other matters raised in the Report may be forthcoming at a later date.

Priority Proposals

1. provisions of universal opportunity and selective experience in early education;

2. abolition of Grade XII departmental examinations;

3. inauguration of the Alberta Academy, Early Ed and the supporting ACCESS network;

4. extension of opportunities in further education;

5. modification in certification requirements for teachers in early and basic education;

6. reorganization of the Department of Education and Department of Advanced Education;

7. revision of funding arrangements for all levels of recurrent education, including provisions for life experience and student assistance;

8. modification of the school year and of procedures for the transfer of credits;

9. reduction in the length of all general and most professional first-degree programs in universities;

10. preparation of an Integrated Provincial Development Plan.

1. Provision of Universal Opportunity and Selective Experience in Early Education

REACTION: Conditional agreement with the Commission's proposals for early childhood education.

COMMENTS: The Board of Trustees not only has supported recommendations related to extension of programs to five-year olds but was one of the first districts in the province to make provision of learning experiences for this age group within the financial and physical limits of its resources. Since 1966 to the present, this district has continued to extend these opportunities to an increasing degree so that this year we have 10 classes with a total enrollment of 220 pupils in pre-primary education. Our policy has limited these classes to those local communities within our district having "readiness" problems and where vacant classrooms exist.

Our agreement however is conditional on a number of points:

1. Adequate financial support for an extension of services to the age group below six years;

2. Availability of classroom facilities or a clarification of the Department of Education's position on building additions for the extra enrollment;

3. Significant improvement in the supply of qualified professional staff with specialization in Early Childhood Education.

We further would request additional clarification from the government and/or Department of Education as to the specific objectives of the recommended change. Our experiences, limited though they may be, tend to support the research findings on compensatory education projects in the United States of America.

However for the handicapped we would welcome the opportunity to undertake to provide selective experiences for three and four year old children.

It is for the above reasons that we feel the recommendations of the Commission related to the selective experience component of early childhood education would have higher priority at this time than those regarding universal opportunity.

BOARD POLICY:

1.007 - Beginning Attendance Age

Children who attain the age of six years by October 31st of any school year may be enrolled as pupils in September of that school year. Children who attain the age of six years by January 31st of the school year will be classified as probationary pupils.

Regulations pertaining to admittance of probationary pupils will be promulgated by the Superintendent of Schools.

Motion passed by the Board April 5, 1967

Moved that the Board approve the elimination of present age and grade requirements for entrance into Special Education Classes and establish that beginning the school year, 1967-68 minimum entrance age for emotionally disturbed, neurologically impaired and sight classes be five years on or before January 31 of the school year and 6 years on or before January 31 of the school year for educable mentally handicapped and reading classes.

2. Abolition of Grade XII Departmental Examinations

REACTION: Conditional Agreement

COMMENTS: Our Board has repeatedly over the past 6-8 years recommended that all departmental examinations cease to be compulsory. These recommendations have been made directly to government, the Department of Education as well as to trustee associations in which we hold membership.

We feel however that those school districts or individual parents or pupils desiring to maintain these types of standards should have the opportunity of electing to have these examinations made available to them.

We also strongly feel that post-secondary institutions should either accept the sending institution's student evaluation for admittance purposes or establish and administer their own entrance examinations.

3. Inauguration of the Alberta Academy, Early Ed. and the Supporting Access Network

REACTION: Conditional agreement.

COMMENTS: Our Board's main concern with these recommendations is to ensure that the government, in its consideration of educational innovations and in its deliberations on the allocation or re-allocation of financial resources, maintains the highest priority for that segment of the educational process which is basic, i.e., pre-primary through grade XII.

In principle however we support the recommendations related to the Alberta Academy, the ACCESS network and Early Ed. Although the operations pertinent to each have need for considerable coordination should they be implemented they should be organized with a view to operating with the greatest possible degree of local autonomy.

4. Extension of Opportunities in Further Education

REACTION: Agreement

COMMENTS: Our Board endorses the principle that education is a life-long process, however we have always made a distinction between "schooling" and "education" as well as having maintained the effectiveness of agencies other than schools in the education of individuals. We also have expressed our concerns over the duplication of services, programs, etc., which exist in a number of our urban centres. We have expressed our desire in the past for a fully developed community college program which would be the major vehicle for providing those educational experiences required by our post-secondary population. We do not feel that the local school district should assume responsibility in this area.

5. Modification in Certification Requirements for Teachers in Early and Basic Education

REACTION: Partial agreement.

COMMENTS: Our experiences to date have not indicated any strong dissatisfaction with the present situation as related to teacher certification. Our concerns are related more to the process whereby the product of the teacher training institutions is developed. We have repeatedly supported the present internship program and have recommended that this program become compulsory and extended in its term. As a Catholic school district we have strong reaction to the present training program as no provision is made for the acquisition of concepts, attitudes, skills, etc., in areas related to Religious Education. In this major area of our responsibility we feel that the teacher training program is not serving our needs.

With respect to specific statements of the Commission's report in this area, we feel that the local school district must retain its management function in evaluating and competency of its staff, subject, as at present, to an appeal process. We would support a periodical review of teacher certification so as to assure the continuing professional development of staff (we feel that the ten-year proposal of the Commission is

reasonable). As to the recommendation related to the term of administrative appointment, we would suggest a modification in the Commission's recommendation whereby an individual is appointed (or promoted) to a classification of administrative position with tenure but not to a particular school, i.e. principalship of schools within a range of pupil enrollment and at the end of a five-year term subject to transfer to a similar school or to the next level of school.

6. Reorganization of the Department of Education and the Department of Advanced Education

REACTION: Agreement

COMMENTS: Our Board believes that the motives stated by the government leading to the formation of the new department are valid.

The proposal for the formation of the Alberta Education Council does not appear to be consistent with other recommendations in the Report seeking to place responsibility with elected representatives of the people.

7. Revision of Funding Arrangements at all Levels of Recurrent Education Including Provisions for Life Experience and Student Assistance

REACTION: Agreement

COMMENTS: Our Board supports the view that operational expenditures should be budgeted on a three-year basis and on a five-year basis for capital costs.

Any changes in basis for allocation of funds should be preceded by one year and one half of notice of intent especially as long as the school year, the school fiscal year and the Government's fiscal year do not correspond. Should these be reconciled then one year notice would still be necessary for responsible planning.

8. Modification of the School Year and of Procedures for the Transfer of Credits

REACTION: Agreement

COMMENTS: Our Board has supported recommendations for modification of the school year in the past and hopes that the government will accept the Commission's recommendations in this area.

Our district supports the principle that students be permitted to transfer from one institution to another and that transfer points be articulated in such a manner that as few obstacles as possible be placed in effecting student transfers.

9. Reduction in the Length of All General and Most Professional First Degree Programs in Universities

REACTION: Agreement

COMMENTS: The Board supports recommendations that would enable students to complete programs in post-secondary institutions in a shorter period of time provided the quality of the program can be guaranteed.

Our district also supports the recommendation for a compulsory, pre-service internship for student teachers.

10. Preparation of an Integrated Provincial Development Plan

REACTION: Conditional agreement

COMMENTS: While supporting the principle of the Provincial Development Plan, our district cautions the government to resist any lessening in the autonomy of local school districts.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1.	Provision of Universal Opportunity and Selective Experience in Early Education	CONDITIONAL AGREEMENT
2.	Abolition of Grade XII Departmental Examinations	CONDITIONAL AGREEMENT
3.	Inauguration of the Alberta Academy, Early Ed. and the Supporting Access Network	CONDITIONAL AGREEMENT
4.	Extension of Opportunities in Further Education	AGREEMENT
5.	Modification in Certification Requirements for Teachers in Early and Basic Education	PARTIAL AGREEMENT
6.	Reorganization of the Department of Education and the Department of Advanced Education	AGREEMENT
7.	Revision of Funding Arrangements at all Levels of Recurrent Education Including Provisions for Life Experience and Student Assistance	AGREEMENT
8.	Modification of the School Year and of Procedures for the Transfer of Credits	AGREEMENT
9.	Reduction in the Length of All General and Most Professional First Degree Programs in Universities	AGREEMENT
10.	Preparation of an Integrated Provincial Development Plan	CONDITIONAL AGREEMENT

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SPECIAL EDUCATION

Considerable emphasis has been placed in the Commission Report on the early diagnosis and education for the atypical child. This is consistent with the Moore, Moon and Moore study report which summarizes studies on early education. These studies suggest that whereas early education may not be necessary and/or desirable for the majority of the children the converse is true for atypical children.

There is presently an increasing demand in special education for more relevant educational diagnosis and prescription. This demand can only be met if we have access to adequately trained personnel resource materials and plant facilities. Moneys must, therefore, be available to train an initial contingent of special educators and specialist support staff personnel. Plant facilities must be established at the school level where personnel can apply their knowledge and skills. Additional facilities must be available to serve as a deposit of resource materials and program reproduction, but, more importantly for program development through local research into diagnosis and prescription. Urban school districts should thus develop Regional Learning Centres to meet the needs of their atypical population and to assist rural districts in their efforts.

The Report accepts an incidence rate of atypical children up to 15% of the school population; this is very much in agreement with incidence rate studies in North America, Europe and England.

In general we would agree with the positions taken in this Report as they relate to special education services. However, we would question the section dealing with learning disabilities. The following statements we feel are either incorrect or too optimistic.

1. "A learning disability is... some essential learning process... spatial orientation." This should read learning processes.

2. "Obviously... remedial as early as possible." We believe that the development of individual faculties are not related to chronological age and that there can be discrepancies in intra and inter development. Thus certain deficiencies may be dependent on further physiological, neurological and psychological development.

3. "Learning therapists are able... at home." This statement implies that we know much more than we do in fact re the present role and skills of the learning therapists. These are the people we need to train through further university training and by establishing diagnostic and prescriptive teams of specialists.

SCHOOL COUNCILS

The Board endorses the concept of school councils but does not agree that structure and responsibilities should be prescribed in advance. The present School Act makes adequate provision for the establishment of school councils. Their success cannot be legislated through detailing form and purpose.

The School Board, of course, must retain ultimate responsibility for meeting the educational needs of the system.

BOARD POLICY:

1.012 - School Councils

The Board of Trustees encourages the development of an effective School Council in each school.

Approved: September 6, 1972

R-1.012 - School Councils (Regulation)

Building principals are encouraged to develop an effective, representative Parent Advisory Council in their school.

The Council should be involved in the planning of those matters of direct interest and concern to parents.

It is expected that the building principal will assume the initiative in the development and maintenance of the Council.

Approved: September 6, 1972

1.011 - Parental Involvement

Parents have the prior right and responsibility for the education of their children.

The members of the Board of Trustees who represent the parents and who are responsible to them for the conduct and operation of schools recognize this principle by the encouragement of communication with trustees individually and with the Board by procedural provision for correspondence and deputations at meetings of the Board.

This principle is also to find recognition in Schools of the District through consultation by the school with parents individually and by consultation collectively through the development of avenues such as Home and School or Parent Teacher Associations or Parent Committees.

Approved: November 17, 1971

PLANNED DIFFERENTIATION INVOLVING DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALIZED SCHOOLS

We agree with planned differentiation insofar as it refers to certain schools within jurisdictions assuming special roles or distinctive characteristics suited to local circumstances e.g. operating under different forms of organization ranging from the strictly institutional to the more or less autonomous. We also agree with open school boundaries as a concomittant of the above. However we become concerned at the suggestion that specialization in schools should be carried to the extent that there might be established special schools for specialized subjects such as the performing arts. This seems to be a proposal towards a degree of specialization we are moving away from in the fields of technical education and special education. To age 18, emphasis should be retained normally on the comprehensive type of school. Experience with special purpose types of schools in the past, for example commercial schools or purely industrial vocational schools, have been found to present problems and weaknesses. It is possible for a school which in other ways is innovative, such as Bishop Carroll, to supply the degree of specialization needed by individuals by going out and using the world of work, by engaging in field experience, and by utilization of other facilities already in existence such as the Banff School of Fine Arts.

BOARD POLICY:

1.005 - Optional Attendance

Subject to the conditions stated below, pupils within the school district may attend any district school on written notice by their parents. Conditions whereby this option is determined include:

1. The approval of the school principal in the desired school.

2. Provision of transportation shall be in accordance with existing policy, applied in respect of the school area in which the pupil resides:

   a) If a student receives transportation at the school he (she) presently attends, transportation will also be provided to the new school the student attends.

   b) If a student <u>does not</u> receive transportation at the school he (she) presently attends, it will be the parents' responsibility to supply transportation.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

We support the fullest possible use of school facilities so that, at times when they are not being used as a place for schooling, buildings may be used as a neighborhood centre for sports and leisure time activities, and as a focus for community life. We cannot favorably view buildings being employed for delivery of health and social development services, legal aid, employment information and other assistance to individuals and families especially as a function of a school board's legitimate area of concern. We adopt this posture because we agree with the Commission's assessment that prime consideration should be given to the basic education function, secondary consideration should be given to early and further education programs and, only after all educational needs have been met should consideration be given to various community activities and to special services. Attempts to broaden the scope of services too widely will result in the reduction of services in any particular direction to too low a level. The prime obligation that we have is to provide a quality education for the children of our Catholic community and this should and will consume the major part of our energies. The schools, when not in use for the above purposes, should be made available for other purposes that represent community needs.

At one point, page 71, there appears to be some advocacy that a community school should replace the operation of the dual public school system since it "provides for the intermingling of persons of different ages, sexes, intelligence, socio-economic status and ethnic origins as a basis for building mutual respect and understanding", but surely this condition prevails already in both public and separate school systems.

The word 'community' itself gives difficulty. There are in fact a considerable number of communities of interest which sometimes are parallel, sometimes overlap, and sometimes are separate and distinct. For example, certain people could live in an area known as the larger community of South Calgary. They could live in several different provincial constituencies; in different federal constituencies; they could be in any number of community associations. At any given time they would be served by two distinct elementary, junior high and senior high school districts. These are all valid communities of interest and in fact geographically identifiable communities, and create some difficulty in the concept of defining a community of a set geographical basis and then seeking to integrate for that geographical basis all forms of educational, social and welfare interests and needs. There is also an underlying assumption that the school is the logical centre for such

integration. Furthermore there are innumberable overlapping communities of interest involving religions, sports, politics, hobbies, occupations, etc. When the school legitimately becomes two publically supported school districts, and in many instances a number of privately supported school operations, it becomes less satisfactory to employ the term school in a generic sense in discussions of school/community integration.

BOARD POLICY:

2.111 - Use of School Buildings During Hours that School Is Not in Session

A. Extra School Educational Classes - Use of School Buildings During Out-of-School Hours:

The Board of Trustees will cooperate with organizations of a religious, community or service nature by making classrooms available for the purpose of providing classes in religious, educational or cultural subjects during out-of-school hours, provided the following general conditions are met:

i) the program to be offered is approved by the Superintendent of Schools

ii) the organization agrees to maintain close liaison with the school principal to ensure that:

a) use of the room does not interfere with the work of the classroom teacher;

b) property of the District or classroom students is not used or tampered with.

iii) the organization must agree to pay the required rental fee and provide the name of a representative who will be responsible for the District's property and the general supervision of the program.

The Superintendent of Schools shall prepare detailed regulations governing such use of school classrooms.

B. Community Use of School Buildings and Grounds:

Except as noted below, the Board of Trustees will make specified portions of school buildings and grounds available to responsible non-profit organizations of a religious, community, service or similar nature for any purpose or function conducted in accordance with the law when such use will not conflict with the school program or school needs.

These facilities shall not be used for the following:

1. The making of profits not related to educational charitable, community or other such purposes.

2. Any function not approved by the Superintendent of Schools.

The Superintendent of Schools shall prepare for the approval of the Board regulations covering all aspects of the use of school facilities for community purposes.

SEPARATE SCHOOLS (INCLUDING RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Commission has stated two truisms upon which the need and desirability (on the part of Catholics) of Separate Schools is posited.

> "Just as beliefs and values of a society determine the kind of educational system it chooses to have, so does its system of schooling affect what beliefs and values are either perpetuated or changed." P.301

and

> "Thus the child's self, or identity, is inextricably bound up with imagery of who parents, teachers and other adults think the child is and what they think the child ought to become."

This calls for a distinctive educational system with its own distinctive goals which we endeavor to be.

We do not support suggestions of shared responsibility with respect to schools for the performing arts, Indian and Metis special junior schools, nor the contention made for the success of the Halifax model. An administration exists to carry out its organization's particular purposes. Distinctive administrations can merge in whole or in part only when their organization's purposes merge. However, whilst each retains its own identity and purpose there can still be, as there are, many occasions and examplesof cooperation and joint activity.

The discussion on religious studies (a term and concept which we have espoused at the senior high school level) prompts us to

make clear that we do not hold this synonomous with religious education which is one of the basic purposes of our separate existence. Religious education derives from the existence of our common faith community which we seek to vivify in microcosm in the school through witness of teachers of Catholic faith working in cooperation with home and church. We seek to deliver in their fullest measure all the values of education espoused by our general society but to enrich and inform these with values which derive from our particular faith.

We are not aware of the manner by which our existence or operation is seen to conflict with human rights legislation and would be very seriously distressed should such interpretation prevail.

BOARD POLICY:

1.102 - Religious Education Instruction, Teacher Responsibility for

The expectations of the Board of Trustees related to the responsibility for religious education by members of the instructional staff includes a willingness, on the part of each teacher, to provide an adequate religious education program to the best of his/her ability.

This expectation is to be a commitment on the part of each Catholic teacher accepting an offer of employment with this School District.

Approved: August 25, 1971

1.103 - Religious Education, Pupil Participation in

All Catholic pupils attending schools within Calgary R.C. Separate School District No. 1 shall participate in religious education offered by the respective school, unless a parent requests otherwise in accordance with section 154 of The School Act 1970.

Approved: August 25, 1971

1.181 - Extra Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

A Catholic philosophy of education adheres to the concept of total development of the child; the physical, the social, the intellectual, the aesthetic, and the spiritual, all harmoniously blended as to form a truly Christian character and personality.

The schools can best realize this aim by providing rich and stimulating educational experience involving, in addition to regular instructional programs, opportunities to participate in a variety of suitable activities.

The Superintendent of Schools shall develop regulations governing extra and co-curricular activities.

Approved: September 1, 1971

INTERPROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION

The Board believes that there is an interprovincial and federal role to be played in the coordination of educational programming, and in research and development through cooperation which can be achieved without challenge to basic provincial autonomy in educational matters.

Our district is presently one of the active participants in The Canada West Project and in the Interprovincial Evaluation Project. We strongly support the activities of Ministers of Education of the western provinces in their interprovincial discussions regarding curriculum.

We support a Canadian National Office of Educational Research. Such an agency could act as a Canadian clearing house for information. In the process the agency would function as a liaison organization, serving in part, the needs of the Canadian Education Association, the Canadian School Trustees' Association, Provincial Departments of Education, the Federal Government, etc. In addition to this function, the proposed agency would have definite responsibilities for carrying out activities of goal setting, forecasting, planning, basic research, design, testing and implementation.

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